

PCT

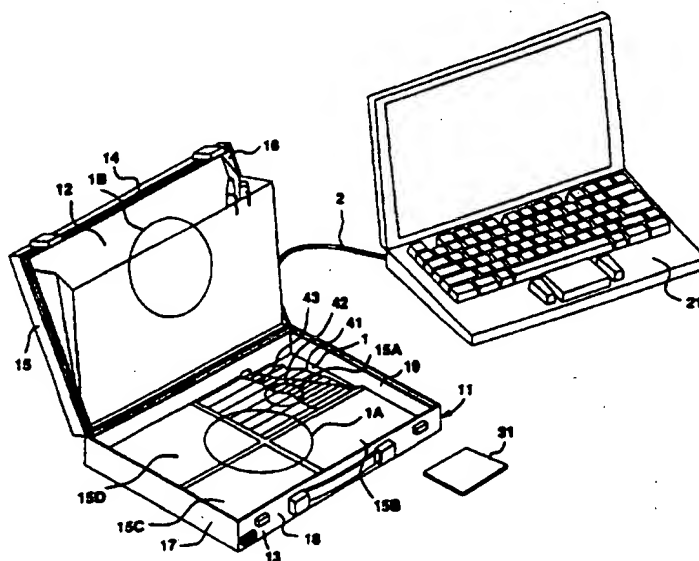
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(21) International Application Number: PCT/US97/15458 (22) International Filing Date: 3 September 1997 (03.09.97) (30) Priority Data: 08/722,605 27 September 1996 (27.09.96) US (71) Applicant: ENERGY RESEARCH CORPORATION [US/US]; 3 Great Pasture Road, Danbury, CT 06813 (US). (72) Inventors: CHARKEY, Allen; 61 Longmeadow Hill Road, Brookfield, CT 06804 (US). COATES, Dwaine, K.; 110 Coalpit Hill B4, Danbury, CT 06813 (US). (74) Agent: TORRENTE, John, J.; Robin, Blecker, Daley & Driscoll, 330 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (US).		(81) Designated States: CN, JP, European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE). Published With international search report.

(54) Title: BATTERY INCORPORATED INTO COMPUTER CARRYING CASE



(57) Abstract

A computer carrying case (11) having a battery assembly (1A or 1B) integrated into a panel or panels of the case.

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BATTERY INCORPORATED INTO COMPUTER CARRYING CASEBACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a battery and, in particular,
5 to a battery for supplying power to a mobile or laptop
computer.

The mobile or laptop computer market has two major
trends. One trend is towards smaller, lighter
computers, such as palmtop computers, and the other is
10 towards more powerful integrated functional systems,
incorporating peripheral devices such as CD-ROM drives,
cellular FAX/modems and color printers. These two
trends are divergent with respect to system requirements
and serve two specialized markets. Highly functional
15 integrated systems serve a unique segment of the
business market that actually rely on mobile computing,
the "mobile office" concept.

The typical laptop computer has an operating time
of two hours or less with currently available batteries
20 which are housed in the computer. This brief run time
greatly limits the usefulness of the device, and in fact
may defeat the purpose of having a laptop.

A possible solution to the short operating run
time, which becomes even shorter with the addition of
25 peripheral devices, is to increase the energy storage
capacity of the battery. This necessitates making the
battery larger, thereby increasing the physical size and
weight of the computer and is not an acceptable
approach. Another approach is to carry along extra
30 batteries. This approach is extremely inconvenient.

It is, therefore, an object of the present
invention to provide a battery for a mobile computer
which can be of higher power, but which does not
necessitate increasing the size of the computer.

35 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the principles of the present
invention, the above and other objectives are realized
in a battery assembly formed as an integrated part of

one or more of the top, bottom and side panels of a carrying case for a mobile computer. In the embodiment of the invention to be disclosed hereinbelow, the battery assembly includes first and second nickel-zinc
5 battery modules integrated into the top and bottom panels, respectively, of the case. Each battery module is of molded plastic form and includes a number of planar batteries each having insoluble roll bonded nickel electrodes.

10 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above and other features and aspects of the present invention will become more apparent upon reading the following detailed description in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

15 FIG. 1 shows diagrammatically a battery assembly incorporated into a mobile computer carrying case in accordance with the principles of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIG. 1 shows diagrammatically a battery assembly 1
20 incorporated into a mobile or laptop computer carrying case 11, in accordance with the principles of the present invention. As shown, the battery assembly 1 includes two battery modules 1A and 1B formed as integral parts of the top and bottom panels 12 and 13 of
25 the case 11. The case 11 further includes lightweight side panels 14-19 which can comprise plastic or metal and which complete the case 11.

A battery cable 2 permits the output of the battery modules 1A and 1B to deliver power to a computer 21 to
30 be carried in the case 11. Since the battery modules 1A and 1B are integrated with the top and bottom panels of the case, the computer 21 can be operated while the computer is inside or outside the case. Also, since the battery modules are not stored within the computer 21,
35 they can be designed for significantly increased power and run times, while not requiring an increase in the size of the computer. The increased power of the battery modules also permits peripherals, such as,

printers, CD-ROM drives, memory backup and fax modems to be used with the computer. Preferably, the battery modules 1A and 1B are of light weight molded plastic form. Also, preferably, the modules comprise planar, nickel-zinc batteries, having insoluble, roll bonded composite zinc electrodes and an improved electrolyte system. With this construction, the modules are low cost, light weight and extremely flexible, permitting easy integration into the case 11.

10 A microprocessor based printed circuit board 31 supported adjacent to the side panel 19 of the case is used to distribute and condition battery power for a variety of uses, as well as to provide state-of-charge monitoring for the battery assembly 1. The circuit
15 board also communicates through the cable 2 directly with the computer 21 to provide battery data to the power management software resident in the computer. A battery charging function of the circuit board 31 allows the battery modules 1A and 1B to be charged from a
20 variety of input sources, such as, U.S. or European A.C. line power or twelve volt D.C. power from an automobile battery. The battery modules 1A and 1B may also be used to power additional devices other than computer 21 such as cellular phones or be used to recharge batteries of
25 other devices.

FIG. 1 also shows a detailed diagram of the bottom battery module 1B of FIG. 1. As shown, the battery module includes four batteries 15A, 15B, 15C and 15D formed as a prismatic four-battery monoblock providing
30 six volts of power. With battery module 1A similarly formed, the case 11 provides a total of twelve volts D.C. power. Each of the batteries 15A-15D is comprised of a layered structure of a positive plate 41, a separator 42 and a negative plate 43 to form a cell
35 pack. The packs are united into the four battery monoblock of molded plastic, so as to provide the needed strength to be used as the structural components of the respective top or bottom panel of the case 11. The

batteries 15A-15D of the monoblock thus have large flat surface areas which allow the batteries to be thin enough so as not to significantly increase the thickness of the case 11.

5 As can be appreciated, the battery modules 1A and 1B form the major structural components of the top and bottom panels 12 and 13 of the case 11, with the side panels forming the remaining framework of the case.

10 In all cases it is understood that the above-described arrangements are merely illustrative of the many possible specific embodiments which represent applications of the present invention. Numerous and varied other arrangements can be readily devised in accordance with the principles of the present invention
15 without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

What Is Claimed Is

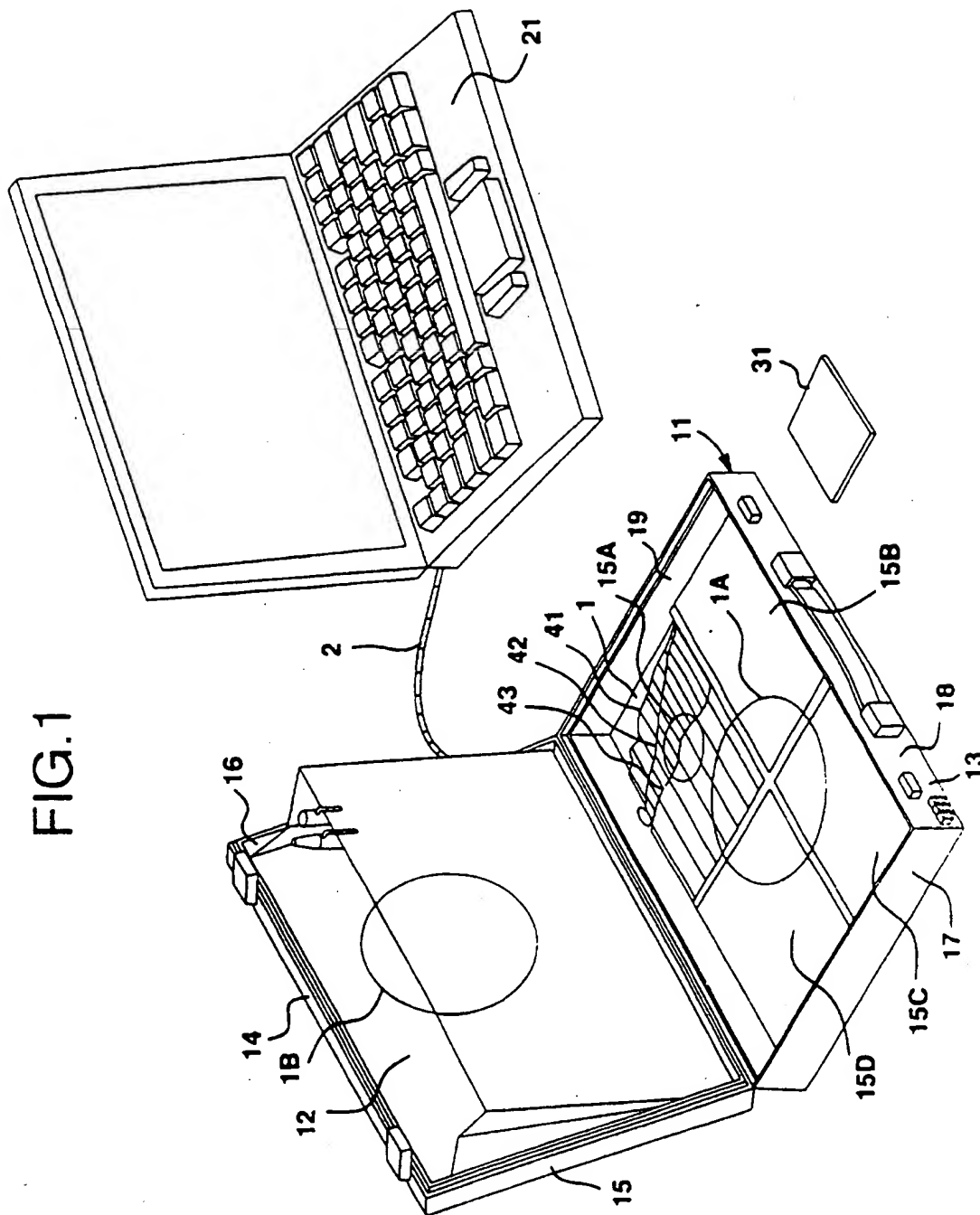
1. A case for carrying a computer, comprising:
top and bottom panels;
side panels attached to said top and bottom
5 panels; and
a battery assembly integrated into at least
one of said panels for providing power to the computer.
2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein:
said one panel is one of the top and bottom
10 panels.
3. The apparatus of claim 2 further comprising:
a further battery assembly incorporated into
the other of the one of the top and bottom panels.
4. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein:
15 said battery assembly comprises a battery
module including at least one battery supported in
molded plastic.
5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein:
said one battery is a nickel-zinc battery.
- 20 6. The apparatus of claim 5 wherein:
said nickel-zinc battery comprises a negative
zinc electrode.
7. The apparatus of claim 6 wherein:
said negative zinc electrode is insoluble and
25 roll bonded.
8. The apparatus of claim 5 wherein:
said one battery includes planar positive and
negative electrodes with a separator therebetween.
9. The apparatus of claim 5 wherein:
30 said battery module comprises a plurality of
batteries supported in a molded plastic monoblock.
10. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein:
each of said batteries of said monoblock is a
nickel-zinc battery.

35

11. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein:
each nickel-zinc battery comprises a negative
zinc electrode.
12. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein:
5 each said negative zinc electrode is insoluble
and roll bonded.
13. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein:
each of said batteries includes planar
positive and negative electrodes with a separator
10 therebetween.
14. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein:
said plurality of batteries provide a six volt
output.
15. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising:
15 a microprocessor to control power management
and power distribution of said battery assembly.
16. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising:
a battery charger to charge said battery.
17. The apparatus of claim 16 wherein:
20 said battery charger carries out charge
monitoring of the battery.
18. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein:
said microprocessor communicates directly with
the computer and battery management software in the
25 computer.
19. The apparatus of claim 1:
wherein said case has a power output to power
other devices.
20. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein:
30 said case has a charge output to charge other
devices and batteries.

I/I

FIG.1



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US97/15495 53

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) : G06F 1/26

US CL : 395/750.08

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 395/750.08; 320/2, 6

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

APS - search terms: battery pack#, (lap top or laptop or notebook or note book or portable)(w)computer, nickel-zinc(w)(batter### or cell#)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X ----- Y	US 5,475,626 A (VILETTO) 12 December 1995, figs.1-4 and 10 and cols. 3-4.	1,2,4,and 15-19 ----- 3,5-10,13,14
Y	US 5,553,294 A (NANNO et al) 03 September 1996, abstract and fig.1.	3
A,P	US 5,630,155 A (KARAKI et al) 13 May 1997, abstract and figs. 1B,3A, and 3B.	1-20
A	US 5,039,928 A (NISHI et al) 13 August 1991, fig.5 and cols. 2-3.	1-20
A,P	US 5,563,493 A (MATSUDA et al) 08 October 1996, abstract and fig.8.	1-20

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.
 ☐ See patent family annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

14 OCTOBER 1997


Date of mailing of the international search report

08 DEC 1997

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